

Land Policy

**Towards a More Equitable
Farming Future**



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Whose land?



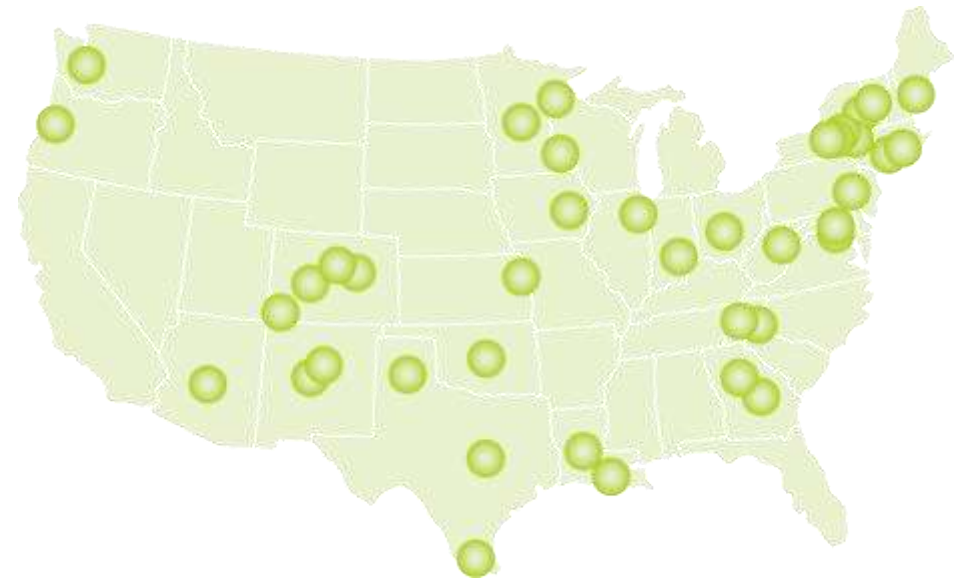
National Young Farmers Coalition

The **National Young Farmers Coalition** is a network of 200,000+ farmers, ranchers and supporters building a brighter and more equitable future for U.S. agriculture.

Our Mission

The National Young Farmers Coalition represents, mobilizes, and engages young farmers to ensure their success. We change policy, build networks, and provide business services to ensure all young farmers have the chance to succeed.

Our Chapters



1,900+
members



72K
followers



62K
followers



16.4K
followers



22,000
newsletter subscribers

Land Policy Project

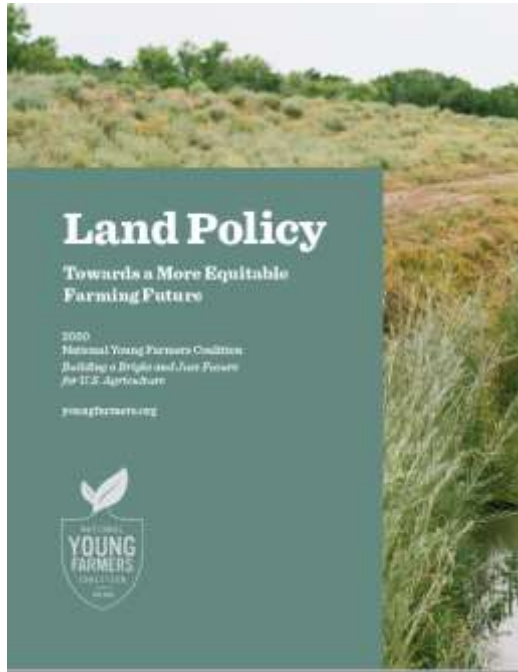
A multi-part project including research, writing, communication, and advocacy.

- 30+ stakeholder interviews
- Policy platform & research review
- Report
- Website
- Farmer Land Access Ambassadors



CLIF BAR & COMPANY

youngfarmers.org/land → *coming soon!*



Read the
report!



Explore the
Issue



Read Farmer
Stories



See Policy
Solutions



Farmland in the U.S.

- 77.3 million acres devoted to food we eat
- Almost all cropland and 2/3 of pasture & rangeland owned privately
- Remainder owned by the U.S. gov't (primarily Bureau of Land Management)
- 1/3 of privately-owned land is owned by non farmers
- 7.4% of farms operate 41% of farmland



\$132 billion

Contributed to the U.S. GDP by farms in the U.S.



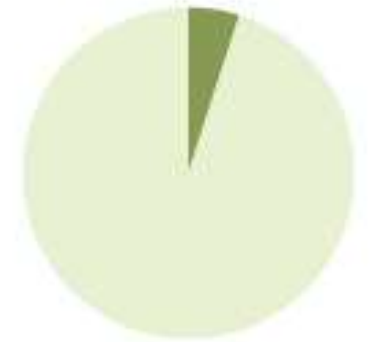
Who controls the land?

Farmland in the U.S. is disproportionately owned and operated by white, male individuals.

98% of all farmland
is owned by white landowners

95% of all farmers are white

86% of farmers
63% of non-farming landowners
are male



White individuals
account for 95% of
farmers



White individuals
own 98% of
farmland and
receive the
vast majority
of agriculture-
related financial
assistance².

This moment is critical

- Each new report from the USDA shows that **land is leaving agriculture**, there are fewer farmers, more land is under development, and **land is increasingly owned by non-farmers**.
- Disproportionate **loss of high-quality land** around urban areas, precisely where young farmers want to farm.
- As many **as 400 million acres of farmland** are expected to need a new farmer soon - *this could represent an incredible opportunity* for young producers to enter the field, but challenges stand in their way.
- **Access to land is the biggest challenge facing current young farmers**; the most significant reason young farmers are leaving agriculture; the biggest barrier young farmers face to getting started; and a challenge for both first-generation and multi-generational farmers.



This moment is critical

- As more farmland is purchased by developers and other non-farming landowners, the **cost of land is steadily becoming disconnected from its value for food production**, particularly near urban markets. *Young farmers simply cannot compete.*
- In 2015, USDA estimated that **less than a quarter of the 91.5 million acres expected to change hands** in the next four years would be made available to non-relatives.
- As much as **80 percent of wealth is inherited**, and the forces of property transfer that have been underway for generations continue to consolidate resources in the hands of a relatively small percentage of the population.

"We fundamentally need to understand that land is a fictitious commodity. Commodities are things that are produced, made, and consumed and can be traded. We've made land into a commodity when it is not. It is a fundamental premise for life. And it is limited."

Mai Nguyen

Secure land tenure is fundamental to farm viability, racial equity, and the success of our climate action.
Now is the critical time to facilitate a just transition of land to the next generation of



Why it matters

Land determines who has the resources and opportunity to succeed in agriculture.

Land is...

- Security
- Capital
- Collateral
- Home
- Food justice
- Safety
- Possibility

Critical for...

- Planning
- Markets
- Soil improvement
- Food safety
- Mental health
- Climate resiliency

“Land is one of the biggest things we hold on to to manipulate society to keep some happy, healthy, and safe and others the opposite.”

– Xusana Davis
Executive Director of Racial Equity
for the State of Vermont



Land Access Challenges

Finding secure access to land is an insurmountable challenge for many young farmers and ranchers.

- **finding land** (land often doesn't come on the formal real estate market)
- **infrastructure** (housing, barns, fencing)
- **accessing financing** / high cost of land, pre-existing student loan debt

- **zoning restrictions**
- **soil quality** (topsoil loss, chemical load in soil, ability to certify land as organic)
- **access to water**
- **secure lease**

- **finding land close to markets** for direct-to-consumer sales (farmstand etc)
- **climate change** (drought, flooding, fires)
- **discrimination**

- **negotiating farm transition** (personalities / legal costs)
- **access to government money** (conservation programs, subsidies, disaster payments, crop insurance)
- **health insurance**
- **labor**
- **childcare**



Power, policy, & land

Public policy has shaped our food system and must be a part of the bold, systemic change required to tackle its interconnected challenges.

Land policy has been used to...

- Control access to power
- Dispossess & fractionate land
- Redistribute & resource
- Prevent access
- Deny access to tools & capital
- Perpetuate wealth accumulation

Examples

- Colonial land ownership laws & voting
- Indian Removal Act & Homestead Acts
- 40 acres and a mule
- Alien land laws
- Redlining
- NRCS programs



Moving Forward

Principles to guide young, BIPOC, and farmer-centered policies. Examples:

- 1. Acknowledge the role that policy has played in creating and perpetuating inequities in our current food system.**
- 2. Support and practice land reclamation for Indigenous communities.**
- 3. Center farmers and farm workers in the policy making process.**
- 4. Value farmland as the basis of food sovereignty, ecological health, and community well-being, rather than simply as a commodity to be sold to the highest bidder.**



Reyna Banteah

Moving Forward

Federal, state, and local policy recommendations to guide key, actionable steps forward.

Calls to action

- Eliminate inequities in land ownership and access
- Protect farmland for producers
- Facilitate appropriate, affordable, and secure land tenure
- Support farm viability and transition



Key Actions

The following is a list of important, actionable steps that should be implemented now. These policy proposals come from the National Young Farmers Coalition, as well as the work of other advocates and organizations acknowledged in the footnotes. We hope this list will serve as a catalyst for action by farmers, policy advocates, elected officials, farm service providers, and all those who are engaged in the work of facilitating land justice, access, and transition.

Federal Policy Recommendations

- ✓ Create a national farmland access and transition initiative funded through both public appropriations and private dollars to support land transition to the next generation with prioritization for projects that resource BIPOC farmers.^{02 03 04 05 06 07}
- ✓ Enact H.R. 40, the Commission to Study and Develop Reparation Proposals for African-Americans Act.⁰⁸ This Act would create a



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